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Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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Committee against Torture
Sixty-fourth session

Summary record of the first part (public)* of the 1654th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 23 July 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Modvig

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* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CAT/C/SR.1654/Add.1.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-fourth session of the Committee against Torture.

2. **Ms. Edelenbos** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that she wished to apprise the Committee of two positive developments. On 31 May 2018, the Bahamas had become the 164th State party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, while on 8 June 2018, after a delay of almost 20 years, Niger had filed its initial report to the Committee. Those two events were clearly linked to the technical assistance visit to the Bahamas of the Convention against Torture Initiative in November 2017; and to the activities undertaken by the OHCHR Capacity-Building Programme in Niger, working through the OHCHR West Africa Regional Office in Dakar. The Convention against Torture Initiative and the OHCHR Capacity-Building Programme were thus key partners both to States parties and to the Committee.

3. The thirtieth meeting of Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies had been held in New York from 28 May to 1 June 2018. In light of the preparations for the 2020 review of the treaty body system, the Chairs had highlighted their inherent responsibility emanating from their mandates and their right to contribute to strengthening the system. The long-standing issue of lack of sufficient resources for the treaty bodies had been addressed at various meetings with relevant stakeholders. One of the outcomes of the thirtieth meeting was a proposal to appoint focal points in each treaty body to develop a common position prior to the 2020 review. Further alignment of the simplified reporting procedure would be considered at the 2019 meeting and the Chairs had also endorsed possible elements for a common, aligned procedure for follow-up to concluding observations, decisions and views. The Secretary-General of the United Nations had met with the Chairs and had expressed his strong support for the treaty bodies.

4. Welcoming the joint statement issued by the coalition of United Nations anti-torture mechanisms on 26 June 2018, under the title "70 years on, torture is still widespread: more action needed to achieve a torture-free world for all", she noted that the prohibition of torture had become jus cogens and was recognized as so fundamental that it superseded all treaties and customary law.

5. The Committee's work on individual complaints under article 22 of the Convention had made a significant contribution to the eradication of torture and she welcomed the steps taken by the Committee to reduce the backlog of such communications, including through the establishment of an intersessional working group to lighten the workload of plenary sittings by considering draft decisions to discontinue or declare complaints inadmissible before the full Committee sessions. The working group would report to the Committee at the current session, and its effectiveness could begin to be assessed.

6. **Mr. Hani** said that he would appreciate details on the number of initial reports still due for submission.

7. **Ms. Edelenbos** said that she would provide that information later in the session, after conferring with colleagues from the Capacity-Building Programme.

Adoption of the agenda (CAT/C/64/1)

8. *The agenda was adopted.*

The public part of the meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.